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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 August 1956

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 64-56

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SUBJECT: Report on [REDACTED] Trip to the USSR

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1. [REDACTED] spent approximately one month in the USSR in June-July of this year, visiting Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Yalta, Sochi, and Tbilisi. He made previous trips in [REDACTED]

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25X1A [REDACTED] He was able to understand considerable Russian but to speak only a little, so he used interpreters throughout his travels. His observations and impressions can be divided into two kinds, major and miscellaneous.

Major Observations

2. He was struck by the extent to which the food situation was better than his previous estimates, although prices (except for bread) remain quite high. He feels that food is not the limiting factor he judged it to be, that his own estimate requires considerable revision, and that ONE estimates require some (although less) revision in this respect.*

25X1A 3. [REDACTED] received abundant impressions of a complex, indefinable, but nonetheless real relaxation in everyday life. The widespread grimness and sullen expressions of the populace which he recalled from the thirties were much reduced. He feels that the arrest rate among the citizenry has surely declined and that some sort of fairly orderly court procedure prevails. Citizens were still chary of conversing with foreigners, although somewhat less so than before, and were uniformly cordial to him. He noted a dissolving of the atmosphere of hardness, ruthlessness, and arrogance previously generated by officials, whose public swagger, quite obvious in the thirties, has disappeared. He remarked on an apparent decline in popular fear of the cops. The collective farms he visited had less of an atmosphere of managerial toughness vis-a-vis the peasantry, and he observed some slight evidence that industrial managers are trying a little to be "good guys" in their workers' eyes, although Soviet industry still remains much more authoritarian than US industry. He repeatedly noted, however,

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* [REDACTED] has not read NIE 11-4-56, and his remarks on NIE estimates relate to 11-3-55 and earlier issuances.

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that all these changes rest solely upon the sufferance of the leadership and are not based upon the guarantees of democratic, parliamentary institutions.

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4. [REDACTED] regards quite seriously the attractiveness of the USSR to Asian and African delegations. He found such groups, of all sorts of types and from all sorts of nations, very much in evidence this summer. Strong points for those from underdeveloped areas include the living standard, the Moscow and Leningrad subways, the elegant sanatoria on the Black Sea, Moscow University, the Moscow opera and ballet, countrywide peace propaganda repeated to an "unbelievable" extent, and a system of handling delegation well organized to exploit these attractions.

5. His trip impressions, together with published materials and conversations with Embassy Moscow, lead [REDACTED] to the following political estimates: 25X1A

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a. His belief in the collectivity of the present leadership has been strengthened. He seemed to sense a kind of self-protective huddling together of the top personalities, suggesting that they fear to be separated. This might be due in part to mutual distrust, but is more likely an expression of a need felt for each other's support, due in turn to a sense of insecurity with regard to the source of their power. [REDACTED] is partial to a further deduction which fits this impression: that the leaders fear being charged with Stalin's murder and have therefore had to blacken his name and to remain united among themselves.

b. He is more convinced than before, and for a somewhat different reason, that the danger of war has declined substantially since Stalin's death. Rather than stressing the uncertainty of authority and conflict among the leadership (which were nevertheless sound estimates, e.g. the disposal of Beriya), he now lays emphasis upon the absence of "Stalin's sinister, macabre yen towards power and death." He believes that the present leaders lack Stalin's sadistic enjoyment in exercising cruel power and his obsession with secrecy, that they are not paranoids.

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c. In explaining the policy of internal relaxation and greater efforts to avoid war dangers, [REDACTED] attaches considerable importance to the estimate that the present leaders experienced feelings of revulsion about Stalin's excesses, that they felt the atmosphere of terror was intolerable, that they are sick of living in a charnel house and want a chance to enjoy life a little without the constant snarl of corpses. He regards the leaders' chief problem that of maintaining dynamism and control in a society which lacks the desired internal individual controls and motivations without resorting once again to the old stringent methods.

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6. In general, including the points covered above and others, he believes that our estimates have been "not very far off" and in some respects he has been brought closer to their positions.

Miscellaneous Observations

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7. [REDACTED] confirmed previous reports of the failure to repair war damage in the area taken from Finland, of the evident shoddiness and inefficiency of building, and of the astonishing number of persons occupied in agriculture.

8. His general impression of industrial plants, particularly one producing engines for agricultural machinery in Kharkov, was of great clutter, an overabundance of labor, inefficient production planning, and a fertile field of productivity gains, which will require better management as well as machinery. Despite the evident confusion, output was apparently growing rapidly.

9. A collective farm near Kiev owned five tractors and a combine. The Minister of State Farms repeated to him the official line that all such machinery is owned by the Machine Tractor Stations, but admitted small exceptions when confronted with this instance. The Minister also reported that many collective farms had been transformed into state farms and that this development was official policy.

10. A much greater readiness on the part of local officials to supply economic information clearly implies a central policy decision to this effect, although some areas remain taboo. One plant manager explicitly referred to a present policy of releasing economic data.

11. The Black Sea resorts are extremely elaborate and impressive; about 150 such sanatoria exist merely in Sochi and two small neighboring towns. Sochi lacks slums and "looks like Santa Barbara."

12. The Soviet Union is a most unequal society, and a substantial increase in the size of the upper middle class has occurred since his previous visits. This development belongs to the Stalin period, and if anything the new regime is reducing inequality a little.

13. Except for Moscow, where partial removal has occurred, Stalin's pictures and monuments apparently remain undisturbed. In Gori, [REDACTED] found the guide in the Stalin Museum rather matter-of-fact and only two or three visitors there. He notes a vast difference in deStalinization as portrayed in the Western press and as conveyed in an official line which

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holds that Stalin, while he made mistakes, was nevertheless a great man. In no sense is he presented as a monster.

14. In a conversation with a Vice Chairman of the State Committee on Long-Range Planning (Gosplan), whom he found most cordial, he got an impression of continuous, conscious experimentation with procedures of economic planning and supervision in the direction of decentralization towards lower economic bodies.

15. Urban parks, which were miserable affairs in the thirties, are now quite attractive. Military personnel are slightly less in evidence in the USSR than on his earlier trips. Late in his trip and quite by accident, he discovered evidence that his chauffeurs were secret policemen.

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